

Written by dwight normile
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Now that we're five weeks into the collegiate season, the theme of our IG NCAA Preview, "Sooner Sweepstakes," is coming true. Both the Oklahoma men's and women's teams have gotten off to a hot start, which leads to some insane questions: Will Oklahoma freshman **Maggi Nichols**, who has averaged 39.785 (with a record high of 39.875), ever score below 9.0? (At least she gets to do the all-around, right?) And will the Sooner men ever lose another meet? Their leading average (429.950) is more than 9.0 ahead of No. 2 Stanford.

As dominant as the Oklahoma teams have been so far, the women will have a much more difficult time than the men in winning the NCAA title. That is the beauty of the 10.0, which the men eschewed years ago despite the lack of parity in their dwindling field. The Oklahoma women still have to hit well in the Super Six finals to win its third NCAA title in St. Louis this April. Any Sooner slip-up will open the door for a host of teams to grab the NCAA trophy.

It's a different story for the Sooner men, who don't really need a great meet at West Point to win its 11th NCAA title. An average effort will be enough.

In our NCAA Preview we posed this question to the coaches of the top six men's teams from 2016: Are you in favor of returning to the 10.0? Two were in favor, with caveats. Here are their answers:

Mark Williams (Oklahoma): "No! I believe we must stay with the FIG scoring system to stay relevant."

Thom Glielmi (Stanford): "Yes, but it would have to be initiated by FIG."

Rustam Sharipov (Ohio State): "No. The majority of our guys want to make the national team, they want to go to the world championships, they want to represent the U.S. The more we go away from the 10.0, we are not likely to go back. With a 10.0 it's hard to separate the best guys from the good guys. I think we have to educate our fans more to explain the scores."

Trouble is, the majority of collegiate male gymnasts will not make the national team, let alone represent the U.S. And even if that is their goal, going back to the 10.0 does not necessarily mean easier routines.

Justin Spring (Illinois): "No. The only reason the 10.0 worked, in my opinion, was because it was a score cap. Almost everyone in the competitive field had a 10.0 start value and the audience assumed that to be true for all competitors. If we go to a modified 10.0 using a scaled open-ended Code where only 5% of the competitive field is even close to a 10.0 start value, it will only confuse fans even more."

Randy Jepson (Penn State): "Yes!!! It would be very easy to have judges determine a final score using the current FIG standards and use a multiplier on that score, which would equate to a 10. It would be a huge benefit for media and fans."

Mike Burns (Minnesota): "As much as going back to a 10.0 might make our scoring easier to understand, I don't feel that deviating from the FIG Code of Points is a wise decision. Because a large chunk of the Olympic developmental pipeline runs directly through the NCAA men's program, I feel it's imperative we stay aligned with the FIG."

Should that really be the priority for men's NCAA gymnastics, where many gymnasts are specialists and some don't even make the lineup each week? Doesn't that cater only to the top tier? Do Athletic Directors really want to see their men's gymnastics teams lose by 30 points, which was the margin of victory for Oklahoma over Michigan on Jan. 28?

This weekend No. 1 Oklahoma men will face No. 12 Iowa and No. 7 Minnesota. Iowa averages

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397.183 and Minnesota is at 404.950. Looks like the Sooners can rest a few guys. Where's the drama?

Meanwhile, the Sooner women will meet Auburn on Friday at the Perfect 10 Challenge in Oklahoma City. With OU averaging 197.760 and Auburn 195.717, there is at least a *chance* for an upset.

There are more important priorities for the NCAA men than trying to keep up with international standards. Returning to the 10.0 would give more teams a chance to win dual meets as well as the NCAA Championships. It also might help with attendance. And that's a good thing for a field that includes only 16 varsity programs.